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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: JORDAN: ABBAS'S ANNOUNCEMENT VIEWED AS "SERIOUS,
BUT NOT FINAL"

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Jordanian media and MFA contacts analyzed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's November 5 announcement that he intended not to run in the next presidential election. Most agree that Abbas used his press conference to express deep disappointment about the status of peace negotiations and the perceived U.S. unwillingness to pressure Israel, but that his exact words indicated that his decision was potentially reversible. End Summary.

Media Sees Announcement as "End of Illusion" for Arab Moderates

¶2. (C) On November 8, two leading Jordanian newspapers featured editorials devoted to Abbas's announcement. The Chief Editor of Al-Arab Al-Yawm Arabic daily said that this announcement confirmed that "Arab moderates have lost a great deal by wagering too much on American administrations." The editorial went on to state that "all bets are off now" and that "the resignation -- or intention to resign -- provides one more lesson to the Arab moderate countries, namely that the current balance of power will not produce peace based on the Arab Initiative, the Roadmap, or even Resolution 242."

¶3. (C) Al-Ghad Arabic daily carried the comments of a leading political analyst who said, "Although it is too early to declare an end to the Abbas era, the announcement is a genuine end to illusions for Arab moderates who hoped for the U.S. Administration to put pressure on Israel." He added that the "announcement represents a major turning point and signals that we are at the threshold of a different stage" in regional relations. The analyst went further by speculating what this specifically means for Jordan. In a clear reference to public statements about Jordan as an alternate homeland for the Palestinians, the analyst expressed concern about "the right-wing Israeli government taking clear antagonistic stances towards Jordan" and warned that Jordan "must not stay in the current game" lest it reach the same impasse that Abbas has encountered.

MFA Contacts Say Distress Is Real, But Resignation Likely Is Not

¶4. (C) On November 8, PolChief met with the Director of the Foreign Minister's Personal Office and also the Director of the MFA's North America Bureau. Both believe that the speech is a reflection of the genuine personal distress that Abbas is experiencing at this juncture of the peace negotiations. They believe that this is not an empty gesture and the announcement should be viewed with serious concern. "You really do need to keep Abbas at the table; this is not the time to change major players." However, both contacts noted the specific language used in the televised speech, which highlighted Abbas's "intention" not to seek reelection. They

believe that this leaves Abbas plenty of room to maneuver at a later date should he, indeed, decide to run for office.

Comment

¶5. (C) Jordanian interlocutors clearly picked up the fact that Abbas was only announcing his "intention to resign." However, they are concerned that this speech is the latest in a series of events which have led to an increasing level of pessimism about the prospect for regional peace. This is of concern to Jordanian leaders, who have stated that pessimism creates a fertile ground for radical elements in both Jordan and the region, which will be detrimental to stability. End Comment.
Beecroft